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pr forms that include inn rmost and outermost lay rs of virgin PET with one or more intermediate layers of an oxygen barri r, for example, nylon or EVA, therebetween, possibly also including a central layer of recycled PET, have been proven to be well-suited for the packaging of hot-filled juices or other still beverage products, and it is to these packaging applications that this embodiment of the present invention is especially directed. Other thermoplastic materials that are suited for use in the manufacture of thermoplastic containers by blow molding may also be used, and these materials include polyesters, polyolefins, polyethylene naphthaletes, nitriles and copolymers thereof.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1 and 18, without prejudice, and add claim 19 and amend claims 2, 4, 7, 10, 14 and 17, as follows:

2. (Amended) A container according to claim 19 wherein:

said body portion of said container has a cross-sectional configuration that is generally that of an oval with a larger, part-circular end and a smaller, part-circular opposed end; and

said gripping panels extend into said container in said body portion from said opposed end.

4. (Amended) A container according to claim 3 wherein:

said body portion has a minor lateral extent of at least 4 in., and a major lat ral extent (ML) of at least 5 in., the major lat ral ext nt xtending perpendicularly to said minor lateral extent.

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A9 7. (Amend d) A container according to claim 6 wherein a ratio of the space between opposed gripping panels, as measured between depths of said gripping panels, to the major lateral extent of said container does not exceed 0.55.

A10 10. (Amended) A container according to claim 19 wherein:
said body portion is generally circular in cross-section, and said gripping panels extend into said container in said neck portion.

Subcl
A11 14. (Amended) A container according to claim 13 wherein:
a ratio of the space between opposed gripping panels, as measured between depths of said gripping panels, to the major lateral extent of said container does not exceed 0.55.

A12 17. (Amended) A container according to claim 19, wherein:
said thermoplastic material comprises at least an innermost layer of PET.

Please add new claim 19.

A13 19. (New) A container that is adapted for packaging a still beverage that is introduced, while hot, into the container and is sealed in the container by applying a closure to the finish portion of the container while the beverage is still hot, said container having a body portion with a closed bottom, a neck portion above said body portion, said neck portion tapering inwardly as it extends away from said body portion, and a closure-receiving finish portion, said neck portion being positioned

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betw en said body portion and said neck portion, said container b ing adapt d to hold a liquid, being formed in a single piece by molding from a thermoplastic material and having a body portion with a lateral extent (L) of at least 4 in., said container further having no opening extending laterally therethrough and having a gripping feature formed by a spaced apart pair of opposed gripping panels that extend into said container in one of said body portion and said neck portion, the space (S) between said gripping panel being no more than 2-1/2 in., said body portion having a circumferentially spaced apart plurality of inwardly projecting panels for partial collapsing to accommodate shrinkage of the packaged beverage as it cools.
